

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1435

To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to provide for a national toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance to veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 4, 2001

Mrs. CAPPS (for herself, Mr. EVANS, Mr. TOWNS, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. LUTHER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. MOORE, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. ROSS, Mr. OWENS, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. MCKINNEY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. HOLDEN, Ms. WATERS, Mr. HONDA, Mr. PASCRELL, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. STRICKLAND, Mr. MEEHAN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. MASCARA, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. WYNN, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. MOLLOHAN, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. FILNER, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. COYNE, Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon, Mr. FROST, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. RAHALL, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Mr. KIND, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. UNDERWOOD, Mr. BERMAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. CARSON of Indiana, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. EHRLICH, and Mr. ENGLISH) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to provide for a national toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance to veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Emergency
3 Telephone Service Act of 2001”.

4 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL VETERANS ASSISTANCE HOTLINE**
5 **GRANT.**

6 (a) **AUTHORITY TO AWARD GRANTS.**—The Secretary
7 of Veterans Affairs may award a grant to a private, non-
8 profit entity to provide for the operation of a national, toll-
9 free telephone hotline to provide information and assist-
10 ance to veterans and their families, including crisis inter-
11 vention counseling, general information with respect to
12 veterans benefits under title 38, United States Code, refer-
13 rals to appropriate individuals with expertise in such vet-
14 erans benefits, and information with respect to the provi-
15 sion of emergency shelter and food, substance abuse reha-
16 bilitation, employment training and opportunities, and
17 small business assistance programs.

18 (b) **DURATION.**—A grant under this section may ex-
19 tend over a period of not more than two years.

20 (c) **ANNUAL APPROVAL.**—The provision of payments
21 under a grant under this section shall be subject to annual
22 approval by the Secretary and subject to the availability
23 of appropriations for each fiscal year to make the pay-
24 ments.

25 (d) **ACTIVITIES.**—Funds received by an entity under
26 this section shall be used to establish and operate a na-

1 tional, toll-free telephone hotline to provide information
2 and assistance to veterans. In establishing and operating
3 the hotline, a private, nonprofit entity shall—

4 (1) contract with a carrier for the use of a toll-
5 free telephone line;

6 (2) employ, train, and supervise personnel to
7 answer incoming calls and provide counseling and
8 referral services to callers on a 24-hour-a-day basis;

9 (3) assemble and maintain a current database
10 of information relating to services for veterans to
11 which callers may be referred throughout the United
12 States; and

13 (4) publicize the hotline to potential users
14 throughout the United States.

15 (e) APPLICATION.—A grant may not be made under
16 this section unless an application for such grant has been
17 approved by the Secretary. To be approved by the Sec-
18 retary under this subsection an application shall—

19 (1) contain such agreements, assurances, and
20 information, be in such form and be submitted in
21 such manner as the Secretary shall prescribe
22 through notice in the Federal Register;

23 (2) include a complete description of the appli-
24 cant's plan for the operation of a national veterans
25 assistance hotline grant, including descriptions of—

1 (A) the training program for hotline per-
2 sonnel;

3 (B) the hiring criteria for hotline per-
4 sonnel;

5 (C) the methods for the creation, mainte-
6 nance and updating of a resource database;

7 (D) a plan for publicizing the availability
8 of the hotline;

9 (E) a plan for providing service to non-
10 English speaking callers, including hotline per-
11 sonnel who speak Spanish; and

12 (F) a plan for facilitating access to the
13 hotline by persons with hearing impairments;

14 (3) demonstrate that the applicant has nation-
15 ally recognized expertise in the area of furnishing
16 assistance to veterans and a record of high quality
17 service in furnishing such assistance, including a
18 demonstration of support from advocacy groups,
19 such as Veterans Service Organizations; and

20 (4) contain such other information as the Sec-
21 retary may require.

22 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be
24 appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for
25 each of fiscal years 2002 and 2003.

1 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Funds authorized to be ap-
2 appropriated under paragraph (1) shall remain avail-
3 able until expended.

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